Volume 9 | Number 1 Article 6

6-1981

My Trip Across The Plains

MY TRIP ACROSS THE PLAINS

Dorothy McKenzie

Written in 1901, this account of the 1863 wagon train journey over the Oregon Trail is the record of Arvazena Angeline Spilman Cooper, a great aunt of mine.

Mrs. Cooper was born in Allen County, Kentucky, on April 13, 1845, the daughter of Nathan Cosby Spilman, a grandson of the Thomas Spilman who brought his family to Kentucky about 1785 from Culpepper County, Virginia.

As a child, Mrs. Cooper's family removed to southwest Missouri. Her account, which I have transcribed from the original manuscript, begins in Missouri during the troublesome Civil War days in that area.

Mrs. Cooper, her husband Jack, and the family of his father, the Rev. Mr. Cooper mentioned in the account, all were Kentuckians.

We made our start April 8, 1863. The cause of our leaving Lawrence County, Missouri, at that time was the very unsatisfactory manner in our immediate section of conducting the war of the great rebellion. It seemed to us that we were left almost without a status in our beloved Government.

At that time we had no thought of being abolitionists, but the rebels treated us as such, and while it was true the union men were organized into companies scattered over the State called the Enroller Militia, they were not uniformed or equipped by the government, but had to shift for themselves. They were stationed near their homes and were commonly known as Home Guards, but were in a very poor fix to guard anything. As we were in that dreadful border line that was raided continually by guerilla bands and bushwhackers, it seemed we were doing no good toward aiding in suppressing the rebillion, so we longed to get away.

We had but little hope, however, of getting safely out of the country, as one good old man, who was too old to go into the army and afraid to stay at home, had the year before traded his land to his rebel neighbors, that had ever been good friends with him, for such stock as they cared to spare and started to Kansas. Before he got many miles on the way, these same neighbors overtook him and robbed him of almost everything.

And, too, my husband, Jack, being in this military organization made it doubtful if he could get permission to leave. Still, he said if I was willing and he could get a transfer to the Pacific Coast, he having been to California knew more about that state than any other, we would try to get away. I said I would try it. I would make the venture, anything to live where law and order reigned again and I was eager to make the attempt. Well, Jack was successful in getting his transfer, and when Father Cooper heard of our intentions he decided to make the attempt, too, and in three weeks time we were ready, after a fashion, to start. The country was so devastated we had to go

fifty miles to get tin cups and plates, as they were deemed almost a necessity on the long rough journey. Then we could only get two or three cups and no plates. We had to use our delft ware, but I might as well state right here that there did not much of it survive the trip. We traded our land for a few head of stock, mostly unbroken steers, which were to be our team. We were fortunate enough to procure very good wagons. When it began to seem as if we were really going, Bud asked in great consternation if Pap or Jack knew the way. We had to take such provisions as we could get, not such as we would choose, it being almost impossible to get any dried fruit, or indeed fruit of any kind, or beans. However, we had plenty of bacon and flour and milk on the start, but when we got into the alkali country we could not use it, and quit milking the cows. Canned goods were unknown to us at this time. At this time of preparation I was too bewildered to think much about the partings there would be for me, but when the day came so quickly for starting, I began to realize that that little back-woodsey corner of southwest Missouri was all the world to me, and I was not only leaving my native land, but every single tie of blood relations for something so far away and vague that it seemed very unreal, and I had not the remotest idea that I would ever see any of my kindred again.

Very few of my kinfolks or neighbors came to bid me goodbye, for in that troublous time there was no knowing what the war fiends would do to their homes in their absence. In brooding over all this I let a kind of wordless grief take possession of me, for although I was a nominal Christian, I was too young, being only eighteen, and inexperienced and fearful to have much faith or comfort in anything. In fact, my soul at that time had never heard that blessed assurance, "Lo, I am with you always." I say my grief was wordless, for I was foolishly sensitive and almost as stoical as an Indian in regard to any outward manifestation of emotions. I kept it all to myself, and shed many tears when others were asleep, and kept up appearances so well that no one suspected that I was not reasonably happy.

I was very inexperienced in every way, especially was it so about camping out, and the first night was a trying one. I was morbidly bashful, and a strange man was traveling with us, and too, my dear little baby, Belle, was just learning to walk and would cling to my skirt or if left to herself a moment would get into things. Her favorite pursuit was washing the dishrag in the water bucket, which proved a rather serious matter when we got further on to where water was a very scarce article. I remember one time in the Snake River Region after a very dusty day's drive; we did not have water to spare to wash our faces. Somehow I got the supper ready and we sprawled around on the ground among our pots and pans and dishes and began our first meal of many that followed in very uncomfortable circumstances. One good thing, little Belle never cried and was supremely happy all the time. In fact, she was most too self-assured for she would go anywhere her little stumbling feet would carry her and take everything her bright little eyes spied provided it was not too cumbersome for her little hands. At this first meal, in her busy stumbling efforts, she put her foot into a big cup of very thick sorghum

molasses, and when I spied her she was making strenuous efforts to keep at her work with her foot fast in the cup. End of first day's travel.

Soon after we started, we crossed a small stream called Spring River, which was the first water course we had come to. Consequently, our team did not know it was their duty to keep right on and out on the other side. So they diposed themselves in as promiscuous attitudes as their yokes and chains would permit, and halted for an indefinite time to soak their feet. I thought we would have to wait their pleasure, or Pa would have to get into the water and lead them out, as all the urging seemed to have no effect on them, but in the nick of time a burley fellow came down on the other side and said, "Throw me that whip," and presto, that whip began to pop like a volley of musketry, and the woods fairly roared with the oaths that he rolled out, and those oxen lined out up that bank as if they meant to cross the plains that day. Then the man handed back the whip with the remark, "You don't know how to drive cattle, you must swear at them," which greatly discouraged me for the man was not going with us, and I thought if the team had to be sworn at that way every time we had a stream to cross, I had rather the rebels would murder us all and be done with our troubles. However, those same cattle pulled us all the way to Oregon, and that was the only time I heard them sworn at.

This crossing was near the post where Pa's company was stationed, and it seemed rather significant that they were just making up a scouting party to go out in the direction we were going, which would afford us some protection, but I felt very apprehensive until we were well out of the state. Their very presence kept it always before me that we might be raided and get into a fight for which I had no desire whatever.

Well, we got safely over this dangerous part of our journey, and began to feel like we were really on the way to California. Our party consisted of Grandpa Cooper, Grandma, Sarah, Riley, John, Bud and Patie, and they had taken in a boy aged 18, whose name was Perry Norman, and ourselves. They had two wagons with ox teams, and our party which consisted of Pa, a young man named John Adams, myself and Belle, with one wagon and an ox team. We had some loose horses and cows also. We traveled very slowly most of the first half of our journey, in order to let our stock get in good condition by the time we came to the mountains and poor feed. This part of the journey is "The Plains" and is very monotonous, and at that time the settlements were few and far between after we left Kansas, and one day seemed so much like every other that the only thing worth recording was that we were putting more and more unrecoverable space between us and all that had been so precious since our earliest recollection. Thus we plodded on with the mysterious future unfolding to our vision.

But now I think of it, there were a few incidents that were interesting at the time. The first was at the crossing of the Kaw River, which was the first ferry we came to. Our stock was very hard to get onto the boat, and it took the best part of a half day to get across. The people that kept the ferry were Cherokee Indians and the women came down to the river and politely

invited us up to their house to wait until everything was across, and as I was very tired standing around I accepted their invitation. I found them very well fixed with household affairs, and very kind and sociable. One woman had a very young babe, and had a very handy contrivance she called an Indian cradle for it. It was what we call a hammock now, adapted to the size of an infant, and hung between two bed posts. I thought it very ingenious, but I came so near losing caste by visiting with Indians that I never dared to imitate it, though it was much more convenient than makeshifts I used afterwards.

Then, when we came to the Little Blue in Nebraska, the cattle were very thirsty and not being well broken yet, the hindmost wagon, where Sarah and John were riding, tipped over. This wagon was mostly loaded with bacon and flour, and there was also a churn with a lot of milk in it, near front. John, having a sore toe had got excused from work on account of it. Well, as I was saying, the hindmost team, the one attached to this wagon, were so eager they did not wait, but ran around the wagon in front of them, and their wagon tipped over. Well, there was a scatterment then. The motion of the wagon had made little balls of butter in the milk, and Sarah was just drenched from head to foot, and was a sight to behold, and oh, the howlings and wailings that came from John, who thought that he must be nearly killed, but when we summed up the casualties, he had hurt his sore toe and the rest of the damage was mostly the muss the milk had made.

Then, way out on South Platt, one day when we were turning out for dinner, Perry was so careless as to get Grandma's wagon turned over. We were terribly frightened for a little while, but Grandma was in front of the load and was not very much hurt, and Patie, who was alseep on top of the load, woke up and just scrambled and kept on top and was not hurt at all.

So we fared along, through Kansas and Nebraska, along the two Blues and over the rolling country covered with buffalo grass, seeing less and less of anything like timber until we came to South Platt, where we began to see more people traveling west, and also we met several Mormon freight teams going back east for supplies, and too, we traveled along the overland stage line quite a while and passed stations occasionally where there was always a lot of friendly Indians, who at times annoyed us considerably by begging. They were very anxious to have us know they were friendly, and would come and shake hands with us saying, "How, how," meaning howdy, and Belle learned it right away and would run to meet them and would "How, how" with them, which pleased them greatly.

At Fort Laramie they got rather aggressive in their demands until an officer came over from the fort and told them in their own language that we would need all of what seemed to them our over abundant supplies to keep us from starving on our exceeding long journey. By the way, this same gallant officer was inquiring if some of us white families would take his two halfbreed children and raise them. He said he would rather have them raised by white people than their Indian mother. Although there were several families laying by there that day he found no one willing to take

them. Halfbreeds were a new species to us then.

By this time we had left all settlements far behind, and the country seemed more and more in possession of the Indians, and I think it was just after we had crossed the North Platt that we passed a place where there had been a large Indian camp a short time before. They had left a number of lodge poles, and in looking around the boys found a scalp they had lost. It was an Indian scalp, which did not seem quite so personal as if it had been a white person's. It was skillfully framed into a bent willow twig with sinew, one end of which was left about ten inches long, as if it were for a handle.

All the way over these lonely stretches there had never been a single day that I can remember that we were not cheered by the music of the cheerful meadow larks. I say "we", but in truth I must except myself, for I heard without heeding, though to outward appearance I was normal. My inward gloom was so unnatural and morbid that nothing penetrated it to any ameliorating extent. And too, ever since we began to leave the settlements we had seen drove after drove of antelope, which seemed filled with curiosity about us, and would travel along beside us for hours, but always at a safe distance. At first we tried to stalk them or lure them up with a red flag, as a man at a stage station had told us wonderful tales of how he had killed them that way, but although they would walk round and round as long as we displayed the flag, they seemed to know perfectly well how far away to keep to be safe from a gun. But the buffalo we had heard so much about, and rather dreaded encountering some stampeding herd, we saw nothing of, except dead ones, and two little calves that hunters had captured and taken to the settlements and were raising with their cattle. But the ubiquitous buffalo chips was our only fuel for many days, and was much more satisfactory than one would think who had never tried one.

After finding that scalp, and noting other indications, such as the stock being nervous and easily frightened, and the Indians not coming to "how" with us, we began to think seriously of making up a train for mutual protection. We had just been kind of neighborly with those that were agreeable up to this time. One of those agreeable outfits with horse teams had considerable trouble and a bad fright by their horses getting frightened and running back over a hundred miles, and would have stopped then but the South Platt, which they would not cross, stopped them. There were 24 head of them, all very fine, that they had brought up for the California market, and as they had bought grain and fed them as long as it was obtainable, they were in fine condition.

One of the men borrowed a horse from another horse team outfit to go after them, and as we were still not caring to go fast, we waited along to see if he found them, which fortunately he did, but they were a jaded, sorry looking lot, when he came up with them. I do not know how they stood the trip, as they went to California, and we never heard from them after they turned off.

We began selecting our crowd by consulting with those whom we liked

best of those we had become acquainted with. Among those were several outfits of miners going to Montana. They were more desirable because they had no families to look after, and consquently would be stronger if we had trouble with the Indians. One of these men named Deckert had crossed the plains sixteen times, and by tacit consent we looked upon him as a captain and guide. It was well we did, for his knowledge of the country and willingness to help us saved much hardship and loss of stock. He would go ahead on his horse and find good water, and also guard us against the alkali water which was very fatal if stock drank of it when very thirsty. We saw many dead animals all along the worst section, while we did not lose one. There were fourteen wagons of us now, and we got along so pleasantly we did not like to swell our crowd. So we journeyed on 'til we came to the place to turn off to Oregon.

Here we found a lot more wagons, some bound for one place, and some for the other, but waiting for reenforcements as the knowing ones thought it unsafe to travel alone in small companies through this part of the country. After much discussion most of our crowd decided to come to Oregon. And here occurred the first of many subsequent quarrels. There were two sisters and their husbands that had been traveling with us, that had a large comfortable tent in common, but each had their own wagon. Well, the women wanted to keep together, but the men decided, one for California, the other for Oregon, and as taking a long hard journey is sure to bring out what is disagreeable in anyone's character, they could not divide their tent and part amicably, but must have a first class row. The first night on the Oregon road, the sister that came our way camped by us, and she was feeling very sorrowful. She said she did not feel as if she ever would be happy again. But before we left camp next morning, who should come across country from the other road but the other sister's family, having decided to come to Oregon after all. But they did not sew their tent together again. There had been too many hard things said on both sides. Each came all the way with a miserable little makeshift of a tent.

We now left the Platte River, and started up the Sweetwater. The streams were generally our geographical guides. This led us into a country where there were no stations of any kind, but all held by the Indians, who it was said would be more hostile then any we had seen, which seemed strange to me, as they had entirely quit bothering us by begging. In fact, we did not see any. It was said by the knowing ones to be a sign that they were not friendly. So, before we left the Sweetwater we stopped a few days to collect a large, strong train. There were already some wagons waiting there, and belonging to one was a woman with a very sick baby.

Grandma and I went to see it, leaving Belle with the children at our wagons, but by this time she had concluded that every outfit on the plains belonged to her, or she to them, she was treated with such consideration by everyone, and it was no small matter to keep track of her. So while we were sitting in the tent where the sick child was, the woman's children came and whispered something to her, and they all seemed embarrassed. I was

wondering what was the matter, when I heard an ominous rattling among the pots and pans outside, and went out to investigate. There sat Belle by a pot of beans, from which she had removed the cover, helping herself with her hands. She did not stop when I came, but looked up and said, "Belle like 'em beans." I tried to impress upon her mind that she must wait to be invited, but she was so small, only seventeen months old, that she soon forgot the lesson. That was the beginning of a friendship for me with a woman that I shall remember with gratitude as long as I am capable of remembering anything, but more of this later on.

When we had collected about twenty-seven wagons, another train came along, calling themselves the Johnson Train, with wagons enough to make seventy-three with ours, and as neither party was considered strong enough to go alone through this most dangerous part of all our journey we concluded to go together.

We started on, seventy-three wagons strong, on a new road, built a few years before by the Government for Indian campaigning through to Ft. Hall country on Snake River, called the Lander's Cut-off. It was said that feed and water were better on this road than any other, and also that there was less desert country, all of which we found true.

The Johnson Train were not very well pleased with this decision. None of them had ever crossed the plains before, and were afraid we would get lost. But we were well satisfied, as our captain, Deckert, said it was the best, and we trusted him. Implicity. We were getting into the mountains now, and it was very cold and disagreeable. I had to wear my shawl the first day of July, and was uncomfortably cold then, even while I was cooking over the fire. And as large bodies are usually more ponderous in their movements, our large train proved no exception. It was our aim now to get along as fast as possible, but the Johnson train had the worst old ramshackle wagons, mostly that ever crossed the plains, I think, and in the rough mountain road one would break down almost every day. That delayed the whole train till it was repaired, and it began to look as if we would have to winter in the Rocky Mountains.

And as idle hands are prone to mischief, these idle times of waiting gave great opportunities for mischief making, and there was no lack of material to make it of, for the Johnson Train were mostly rebel, and ours mostly union, which did not make it easier to bear all the other aggravating circumstances. Besides, the "soft answer that turneth away wrath" seemed to be mislaid and lost entirely. The complaints and dissensions waxed hotter and hotter.

The Johnson Train had the whooping cough among their children, and we were afraid we would get it, but we had had the forthought to stipulate that they should form one side of the corral, and we the other, and each keep our children on our own side. But we were afraid that was not sufficiently a safeguard, and we were annoyed greatly at so much delay, of which they were mostly the cause, and they were loud in their denunciations of us for insisting on coming this new road, declaring it would lead us into some kind of ambush, where the Indians would kill us all.

Well, this state of affairs kept getting no better fast, 'til one night this same Mrs. Tice that had the sick baby, accidentally overheard some men of the Johnson Train planning to "lay by" to celebrate the Fourth of July, and get their courage up with whiskey, of which they had a supply, and "clean us out" as they expressed it, and take our teams and wagons and either kill us or leave us to perish. They thought it would be a small episode of the war raging in the land, and maybe would never be heard of. As they did not know they were overheard, we decided to put on a bold front and be discreet, and on no account agree to stop to celebrate, unless a wagon broke down.

We made Grandpa our spokesman, as he was naturally calm and self-possessed, and although he was a preacher and a man of peace, we knew he was no coward, for before he had left home he had stood between two rebels, with their guns almost touching his head, and never quailed, but steadily denied what they demanded of him. Well, we all kept quiet 'til they proposed stopping to celebrate, then Grandpa very calmly told them he "thought it best to keep going on as fast as we could, as we were a long way from our journey's end, and we were getting along so slowly the best we could do." They sneered at us considerably for being so unpatriotic when we claimed to be unionist, but we paid no attention to them. The kind providence that rules over the just and the unjust ordered that no wagon broke that day, and saved us from a dreadful fate, and them from attempting the atrocious crime they comtemplated. Before they could formulate any other scheme, to wit, on the sixth, there happened a catastrophe so dire as to drive everything else out of all our minds. Before relating this occurence I will diagram our manner of corralling.

Guard x Road x Guard

This is very crude, but it will be perceived that the wagon tongues are all on the outside and the front wheel of each is chained to the hind wheel of the one next all round on both sides of the road, which made an ample corral for all our cattle, and the guards would stand in the road at each opening where the wagons did not come together.

The place we camped on the sixth was a beautiful valley at the foot of the east side of the Rocky Mountains, and everything was peaceful and quiet, most of all the people were gone to bed, when the cattle got scared and stampeded, running out at the side where our wagon stood.

There was about 400 head, and they made a noise like thunder. It was not quite dark yet, and I got up to get out of the wagon, but in front of our wagon was a mighty torrent of cattle. They had pressed against our wagon until it turned halfway round. So I sat still and waited with the composure of bewilderment, terror and astonishment. Pa had got out and gone I knew not where, so I thought I best stay where I was.

When the roaring, surging mass of cattle, passed on then the human elements of the disturbance became apparent, and it was no less terrorizing than the other. Such wailings and howlings, especially some of those who "would be" brave warriors of the Johnson Train, I hope I shall never hear

again, for the first impression among them was that the Indians had come sure enough. Men that I should judge had never used the Divine except in profanity, were calling earnestly on the Lord for help; and very naturally I suppose feeling that He was a long way off, they used the utmost power of their lungs. The poor women were screaming, and all those poor whooping-cough children, of whom there were seventy-five in the Johnson Train alone, had to take a turn at coughing, and dogs! This train had evidently started out with the idea that dogs were very scarce where they were going, and they had big dogs, little dogs, mother dogs, and their puppies, and dogs of all nondescript varieties, whose barking added not a little to the unearthly racket.

So I sat and listened, thinking I would surely hear the traditional-war-whoop if it were Indians, which I imagined would be even more terrible than this pandemonium. I did not hear anything that I thought was a war-whoop, but soon I heard something like that that got us out of the predicament at the first stream we crossed, and it was vigorously emphasised by a No. 9 boot on a foot that meant business. It was our efficient guide, Deckert, telling the man that was loudest in his entreaties on the Lord, "to stop his racket that he was frightening the cattle so they could do nothing with them", and he also reminded him that it was a poor time to pray "when the devil was already here." He also went all around admonishing all to be quiet, telling them there were no Indians, 'til the tumult had subsided. Then they got the cattle back in the corral, and went among them and talked soothingly to them 'til they were all quiet, then the people all went to bed again. But there was too much nervous tension, and it was impossible to keep down the coughing of the children, and barking of the dogs, so it was not long 'til they poured out at the other side of the corral. This time they hurt the night guard and broke down a wagon. By this time they were thoroughly panic stricken, and there was but little real rest for anyone that night, for it required the united exertions of all the men to keep them from running over the corral, as that was always their objective point, and destroying everything, themselves included.

When morning came we were a perplexed and woe-be-gone lot. The Johnson Train were clamorous to go on, thinking that if we stayed another night there, the Indians would surely massacre us. They could not get the Indian idea out of their heads. But our side were willing to do whatever Deckert advised, and he thought as it was almost an impossiblity to hitch up the wild frightened steers, we had better wait until they pretty well tired out.

But before the matter was settled, it became evident that I was in a poor fix to travel so when our guide learned that, he said the matter so far as he was concerned, as anybody that insisted on a woman going on in the condition I was in ought to be hung, and he would stay with Cooper if no one else did. So our train all decided to stay, and we were hoping the Johnsonites would go on, but although they did not say so we thought they were afraid to go on without us, and too, the wagon mender belonged to our train. As all remained, Deckert recommended the experiment of each man taking his team and caring for it separately through the day, as it might have a tendency to allay their panic. The scheme succeeded admirably all through

the day, and the people were becoming cheerful again.

At two o'clock a little blue-eyed brother came to share honors and favors with the little black-eyed Belle. At five o'clock a couple took advantage of the layby to get married, and as Grandpa was the only clergyman, they came to his wagon, which was close to ours. I raised my wagon cover a little mite, and can virtually claim that I was at the wedding, as I heard the ceremony distinctly. By sundown we were all feeling that the calamity was over, and we could resume our journey in our usual manner next day. But alas! and alas! when we collected the cattle for the night, they were worse if possible then before, and we saw that it was not safe to put them in the corral, but dangerous to keep them in sight of it. So twenty men on horseback took them about two miles away, and decided to take turnabout, ten watching at a time, and so get a little rest, but there was no rest of any of them, for it was a hard task for all to keep them from getting away entirely. The camp had a very good rest, as the cattle were too far away to disturb us, and as no one reported, we thought they were getting along all right. We found out our mistake when they came in, in the morning, but as it seemed a necessity we essayed to make a start.

This I cannot describe as I was curtained in so I could not see it, but from the noises I heard. I should fail utterly if I had seen it, but I remember my part in it very distinctly. It was perfectly amazing what a state those old slow gentle oxen had got into. They seemed like a huge mass of surging wildness, fright and fear.

In the first place, Deckert, whom all had begun to regard as one to look to in our trouble, as he seemed everywhere at once, managing, working, and directing without thought of rest, sent the women and children on ahead, with what horse teams there were, to get along as best they could 'til it could be seen what could be done with the ox teams.

(From new on my narrative will necessarily be so personal as to seem egotistical, I will write in the third person.)

He, Deckert, also told the father of the new little stranger to get his wagon out of danger of the commotion of the camp, which he proceeded to do, by fixing it in such a manner with ropes that it was deadlocked, then with much maneuvering and much help he succeeded in getting two-thirds of his team hitched up, and dragged his worldly possessions forth for a space on the road, (that is, all except little Belle, whom Grandma had taken) and stopped to wait for the others, standing by his team, for you must know that an ox driver usually walks by the side of his team.

The young mother with her babe lay quietly, listening to the commotion at the corral, which she could not hear very distinctly, and wondering if they would ever get all safely started, when suddenly at a loud crash back at the corral the team started with her, as quick as the flash of a gun at their utmost speed, leaving the father far behind. The mother had long since resigned herself to the inevitable, and made no outcry, thinking if she only knew which way the wagon would turn when it went over, as surely it must, she

might somehow be able to keep her baby more safe, 'til she became sensible that the movement was decidedly slower. Presently she heard her husband's breathless voice demanding if she were frightened. She answered him, "no, but wondering why the team was going so slow," he said that two-fourths more of the team had broken loose and run off, which left one fourth of the team, which was one span of oxen, to continue the runaway, but they were physically unable to make much headway, though they were full of panic, and trying with all their might.

The husband got help, and got the two yoke back, and once more got his team in traveling order, putting on an additional brake of quite another sort, which consisted of a stout young man with a club sufficient to fell an ox if need be, and the others getting into line, fortunately with no other damage than ruining one wagon, they moved forward, and by judicious use of said club, had no more runaways, or other casualities except breaking of their yoke and getting away of the lead pair of steers. They let them go, however, and pushed on with two yokes.

I will state here that this father and mother did not think about what the name of the territory might be, for many a day, and are not very sure yet what it was then, or what it is now, where their son was born.

Not long after leaving this memorable camp they entered a very rocky canyon, continuing up, up, for two days before gaining the summit. In the afternoon of the first day in that rocky canyon a little child belonging to the Johnson Train died as they were toiling along, and was buried that night in that lonely canyon, where there was not adequate room for corralling, or even getting close enough together for mutual protection if we had been molested. The wagon of that poor mother of the young babe stood in such a position on slanting ground that her feet were considerably higher than her head, and she was too nearly distracted to think of changing her head to the other end of the bed, and the father was too tired and sleepy, with his two days and nights chasing insane cattle to notice that all was not comfortable.

By the time they got to the summit the oxen were so jaded they were not quite so hard to control, for they had let them travel at a lively gait, and although this young mother had controlled herself admirably, she had received a severe nervous shock, and when she would be dropping off to sleep, with such weariness as no one who has never been in a similar condition could begin to imagine, she would be certain she heard that terrifying roar the cattle made when starting on a stampede. She even routed out her husband to help when all was quiet.

On account of her rest being so often broken by this terrifying hallucination, and the weariness of the rough road, and also the lack of proper diet, which could not be obtained, the fountain that every child born into the world has an inherent right to, began to diminish, and this little fellow began to complain of short rations, but as the motion of the wagon soothed him in daytime, he entered his protest mainly at night, and as the poor mother was not able to sleep a wink while the wagon was in motion, she was in

exceeding sore straits, for there was nothing in the limited variety of food available that the baby would eat. However, she was saved from utter despair by the good mother Tice conceiving the idea of feeding her baby, which had now fully recovered from its sickness, and saving his legal nourishment for the unfortunate little fellow, who, like Oliver Twist, wanted more! more!

As soon after the stampede as things began to quiet down a little, the leaders of the Johnson Train began to think they had been worse scared than hurt, especially as no Indians appeared as they knew of. However, some had been, for the morning after that child was buried, after proceeding a mile or so it was discovered that two head of cattle were missing, so Deckert sent two of the men back for them, but when they came in sight of the camping place which they could see from the top of a hill before they were very close, they saw some Indians digging up the poor little dead body. So they turned around, and caught up with the train as quickly as possible and reported to Deckert, who advised them to say nothing about it, as the poor stricken mother would hear of it, if they told why they did not find the cattle. As it was very brushy and naturally hard to find stock, but very few knew the real reason.

Deckert thought it best to get away as fast as possible, as they had no means of knowing how many Indians were in the country. The had seen none for a long time, and had no idea there were any near them.

So, they the leaders of the Johnson Train, began to discuss the scheme of organization that they had been harranguing about nearly ever since the two trains had been traveling together. They argued it would be much more business like to have regularly elected captains and lieutenants, and as the frequent halts for repairs gave them plenty of time to canvass the matter, they had great times, and as they had made no headway in interesting our men when they talked of Johnson for captain, they tried another man, one Mr. Angell, who was "hail fellow, well met" with every-body, and extremely popular in his own estimation.

Well, they had a grand election, and as our men would still have nothing to do with it, they elected all the officers of their own kind, went around and numbered all the wagons, and drew up a set of rules about driving. One was that the wagon that drove ahead one day was to fall behind the next, so that in course of time every wagon would have a chance to be in the lead. Now it had been so all the time that on account of the Deckert train having fewer families to the number of men, and their kindness in helping each other, that they would be ready and lined out in the road and waiting before the Johnson train would have their children and dogs all fed and loaded up, for they hauled part of their dogs, and their string and rope toggles all in traveling order.

By common consent the father of the new baby was allowed to go first all the time as it was a little less dusty there and would be a little less disagreeable for the mother who could not get out and walk as did the other women when they came to the worst places. Well, they numbered his

wagon eleven, which was the last feather and broke the camel's back.

Deckert passed the word around to fourteen wagons that had mostly men, and a few women, that they should be extra spry next morning, and when the new baby's team started they should all follow regardless of numbers and leave them. We had better teams, and thought we could keep ahead of them, and too, we did not know but they still meditated some mischief to us. Well, they were slower than ever that morning, thinking they had us fixed so we could not rush things so, and when we lined out the amazement they displayed kept them standing, staring at us 'til we got quite a start. Then the first lieutenant came running up and ordered number eleven to fall back and drive in his place. But as he was short of breath from his run he could not put much force in his command, and all the effect it had was to make the seceders drive faster, then began to wait 'til the rest came on, as he knew we could all be killed, but we told him we would risk it, and drove right on.

Then the fun began, but it was not the kind we expected. It seemed like they loved us better than life itself almost, from the unseemly haste they made to get started and keep up with us. The dogs and children received but scant consideration that morning, and for many days after that, for we made tracks as fast as ever we could, and we got to be experts in hitching up and starting quickly. If we had been in a mood to feel sorry for them, it would have seemed pathetic to see how afraid they were that we would leave them.

If it was hard on top of that mountain, it was but a hint of what it was getting down. The first day of the descent, the young mother's bed slipped clear out from under her, and she had hard work to keep herself and babe from following it into the front part of the wagon box. To make it plain what that means, I will explain that there was a second floor put in the wagon box, at the lower edge of the sideboards just long enough for the beds, making a strong room underneath it, and leaving a space in front to put the water keg, or anything else that might be needed while going along. The front end of this raised floor also served for a seat, as they had no spring seat such as, even our farm wagons have now. There was also a space on the back end where the cooking utensils were stored.

The cattle were mean and unruly on the down grade. The second day her husband tied the young mother's bed to the wagon bows before starting, then sometimes she had hard work to keep from slipping off the bed, and the cattle got worse and worse, 'til the father and club man both had all they could do to keep them from just tearing down that mountain and smashing everything. Everyone got so tired out and little Belle got sleepy. So in the afternoon they put her on her mother's bed. Soon after the road got so steep and rough that she pitched off the bed, and caught balancing on the front gate of the wagon. The mother screamed but the uproar was so great that no one heard her, and the dust so thick that the father, who was not more than ten feet away, could not see the child. If she had fallen out no one but the mother would have known it.

Well, she rose to the occasion, and hauled her in. She had been warned with many solemn shakes of the head by the good old mothers of the train, that the consequences would be dire if she ventured even to lift her head while the wagon was moving, and she was such a foolish, impressionable young thing she thought she might drop dead in consequences of her rash act, but she thought she had rather die than have her daughter mangled under the hoofs of those horrible cattle.

Soon after this a little girl did get run over but as she was at the side of the road only one wheel went over her, and it was a very light wagon, but she was hurt badly enough, anyway. Her lower jaw was split right in front. There was young dentist along who tied the two front teeth together firmly, and she soon got well.

When we did get down the mountain it was into the most beautiful valley I have ever seen. The level, rich soil was covered with luxuriant grass that had the appearance of an immense wheat field. It was about twenty-five miles long by ten wide, with clear mountain stream, fringed with willows, and alive with trout, winding through it.

We camped early, and put out a strong guard with the stock, which were very hungry, as they had fed but little since the stampede, and were giving no trouble. We were cooking and eating a meal once more in peace and some were wishing we had implements and seed, so we could stop and settle in this very paradise of a place, when the guards came tearing around a bend in the stream screaming, "Indians! Indians!" The willows on the stream hid the cattle and the supposed invasion from view. But at the cry, pandemonium broke loose again, and everyone that could even carry a stick, if it was only for a staff to help him along, started as fast as they could go to meet the hostile band.

The young mother was left alone with her babe and little Belle, who might have carried a stick, but did not even get up from the ox yoke where she was sitting eating her supper. The cry of "Indians" had no terrors for her, for all of them she had seen were friendly, and she loved to tell them "how." The poor mother was longing frantically to get her into the wagon, so she could clasp her once more to her bosom before she was scapled, but was dreading the scolding she might possibly get if she got out and got her, when the young man that was traveling with them came back for his ammunition which he had forgotten in his haste, so she had him put her in the wagon. Then she lay there listening for the war whoop and slaughter, but heard nothing but the yelling, screaming and praying that had grown so familiar since the stampede began.

Soon the redoubtable "Capt." Angell returned to camp, saying, "it was no use for him to stay out there as he had no gun." Then the young mother remembered hearing him urging some one that he had a gun in his wagon for someone to take, and loudly proclaiming its merits. She thought at the time that he must have an extra gun, but he was only trying to be left without a gun as he would not have to fight.

Well, after all the hubbub and double quick charge of big, little, old and young, they met four Indians coming to camp with fish to sell! You see the people had got almost as scary as the stock. I will add in defense, though, that it was rather smoky, which kept them from seeing very clearly. Some were for slaying those four Indians right away, saying they were nothing but spies, but Deckert advised moderation, only forbidding anyone selling them any ammunition, which they were exceedingly anxious to buy, offering a good pony for four loads for a shot gun.

After this false alarm, one old fellow that belonged to the Johnson train, but had got out with them, concluded he would go on by himself. He had a horse team, and was tired keeping pace with the slower going oxen. So he went ahead five or six miles, and camped alone, and in the night the Indians stole all but two of his horses, seven I think it was. He did not wait for us to come up with him, but came back to meet us. A party was made up to recover his horses, and they tracked them up and found them not very far away on a hillside covered with fallen timber. They could see no Indians, but the horses were in a place where a half a dozen could have killed a hundred men without exposing themselves. So they decided that discretion was the better part of valor and returned to camp and reported to Deckert. He said that as we could not tell how many Indians there might be, and with all our other adverse circumstances, we had better go on and leave those few horses, as to get into a fight where we would be sure to get several killed, and we could not conjecture what other calamity might befall us with our cattle so wild.

So we pushed on as fast as possible, hoping to get out of this strange wild country, and a few days after this two men came to us from the west, which seemed an indication that we were nearing civilization again, but by this time suspicion was rife, especially among those that had never traveled much, and they did not believe the men were what they said they were, which was that their names were Meek and Gibson, and they owned the ferry on Snake River, where we would have to cross, and instead of being glad to meet them, these men, our men wanted to make way with them, or at least bind and gag them, and keep them under cover, so they could not make any sign to any possible confederates.

Capt. Deckert interfered, saying he believed they were all right, and so great was our faith in him that the father of the little stampede baby took them in as guests for the night, for which they showed him their gratitude in many ways. But great was the relief to the fearful ones when a few days after we came to the Snake River and found our supposed spies keeping it and everything else as they had represented it. Great were their dismay and indignation when they learned the price of crossing, which was five dollars in gold or seven in greenback per wagon. We all thought it rather exhorbitant, but they explained that it was because they had to keep a large band of friendly Indians with them for protection, as those who stole those horses and gave us the scare were treacherous, and that Deckert was wise in not letting them have our ammunition. Besides both the Indians and white men

were very kind to us, helping with the stock and doing everything possible for us, and they would allow us seven dollars for a reasonably good "Q", or take anything we had to spare at what we considered fabulous prices, so they got but little money after all.

But the Johnson people were not to be imposed upon in any such way. They had waxed very brave again, as Mr. Meek had assured us we were past all danger of hostile Indians, they were traveled folks now, they had come all the way from Missouri, and knew a thing or two. They would fix up a wagon box for a boat and do their own ferrying. Mr. Meek told them they could do it, but they would have to be very careful as the stream was full of undercurrents and was treacherous, and showed them the safest place. But they got their improvised boat ready, and were so confident that the little remaining space they yet had to cross after they were on the island was very easy, that a young man plunged in on a horse to carry a rope across with all his heavy clothing on, and a big revolver in his belt, but this undercurrent drew him under as if it were the invisible hands of a giant, and he was seen no more. The horse, which was a large, powerful one, barely escaped.

They hastened off that island, and crossed on the ferry, but stayed three days trying to recover the body, in which the Indians helped valiently, but they were unsuccessful. However, they made up a purse and left with the ferrymen to give to the Indians if they would continue the search 'til they found and buried the body, which we afterwards heard they did.

From that time on we traveled no more as combination train, consequently much that was disagreeable and exciting was lost. But there was little comfort or peace for the mother of the new baby, for by this time he had the habit firmly fixed of howling most of the time the wagon was stopped, and she was still unable to sleep when it was moving. She took cold in her breast, too, and as all the remedies of all kinds, and the delicacies of all the train, and all the patience and kindness of everybody had been so severly taxed by a woman who had got a fish hook fast in her finger way back on Platte River, and had it cut out, and she too, like Oliver Twist was wanting "more, more," and the poor young mother had heard so much about her exactions, she did not ask for attentions but mostly bore her sufferings in grim silence, and her aliment came to its conclusion in its own way almost unaided. It was at the worst about Boise City, and her sufferings were so great, that her recollections are not very distinct for quite a space along there. It all seems like a jumble and confusion of a jolting wagon, crying baby, dust, sagebrush, and passing and being passed with friendly greetings, by those we had traveled so far with, and the never ceasing pain and suffering, which was not greatly diminished 'til we were way up Burnt River.

By this time we were meeting droves and droves of people going to the mines about Boise who told us wonderful tales about big red apples, and all manner of other good things in the Willamette Valley. We thought it strange that they were getting away from there in such numbers, and that they would advise us not to go on to a land of such great plenty, when provisions were so scarce and high along there, but we soon concluded they were gold

crazy, and as we were not we would get to this goodly land as soon as possible.

But we had many weary miles to travel yet, over a rough and uninteresting country for us, for it was but very little settled, 'til we got to Grand Rone Valley, which is a gloriously beautiful sight from the top of the mountain where we first got a glimpse of it. But when we got down into it, there was the same scarcity of something to eat, and by this time we were so starved out we determined to keep on to the jumping off place, if we kept able to travel or find plenty to eat. So still we plodded on meeting so many frieght teams, and pack trains, and bands of cattle that it seemed there would be no one left to welcome us in this land of plenty if we were fortunate enough to reach it. However, we did not much care if we only found it half as plentiful as they all agreed in assuring us it was. The folks we met all agreed about the terrible state of the road over the Cascade mountains, which we found to our sorrow they did not exaggerate. But by dint of sticking to it, tying on logs to our wagons downhill, and digging footholds for our steers uphill, we arrived at Revenue's on the west side of the mountains, and Oh! joy! we found the big red apples.

And we found something else we had not expected, a welcome that a long lost brother might envy. But gratifying as was the hospitality we received at this place, it was but an earnest of what we received all the way into Polk County. I have often heard praised southern hospitality in ante bellum days, and it was undoubtedly great, but as I look at it after receiving this Webfoot welcome, they would have been the meanest people on earth if they had not been so, when they had slaves to feed to the dogs. I do not mean that for slang, for there is more truth than slang in it, for did they not set their dogs on them, and if they did not eat them the masters gave them the opportunity. It was no personal self-sacrifice or hardship for a southerner to be hospitable, but these people ministered to us personally, with the products of their own labors.

They did not wait for us to go to them and ask, but seeing us afar off ran with buckets, baskets and pans, and failing these, aprons and hats full of good things 'til we were threatened with overloading, and believing it would grieve their generous souls if we did not take all that we could eat in the brush by the roadside, and so make the people at the next house happy by finding us unsupplied. And everywhere we went we were treated with such kindly consideration that we felt amply repaid for our persistent struggle to reach this goodly land of peace and plenty.

In conclusion I will state that our large train had scattered to different parts of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and when we stopped our company consisted of Grandpa's two wagons and our one. And the stampede baby, with all his trials and tribulations, at about two months old, when carried into a house for the first time, noticed the difference, and cried to be taken out, where he could see the sky. Weary mother still had life enough to appreciate "The Beautiful Willamette."

But her toils and troubles did not entirely cease with her long journey, for she is now an old mother of a large family.

In apology for this peculiar and inadequate account, I will say that it all happened in time of the war of the rebellion, when suspicion, discord, and anger were rife in the land, and that she has written it entirely from memory, in nineteen hundred and one.